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TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Marvin J. Southard, D.S.W.  
Director of Mental Health

SUBJECT: **OUTCOMES OF HOMELESS CalWORKs FAMILIES PROJECT**

This is to provide you with an update on the California Institute of Mental Health (CIMH) research on the Homeless CalWORKs Families Project (H CFP) in Los Angeles County. CIMH has had a contract with the Department of Mental Health (DMH) for several years to evaluate outcomes of the HCFP.

This study is being prepared for distribution and will be also on the CIMH web site: [www.cimh.org/calworks](http://www.cimh.org/calworks).

### **Background**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors established the interagency HCFP to address the needs of CalWORKs eligible homeless families in which a parent has mental health problems. The attached study "Co-occurring Disorders Treatment at Homeless CalWORKs Families Project Sites" was conducted by CIMH under contract with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH).

The Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has initiated an attempt to make CalWORKs mental health programs capable of dealing with substance abuse problems as well as mental health problems. During FY 2009-10, a pilot project co-located Department of Public Health (DPH) a substance abuse counselor in each DMH HCFP site. The CIMH evaluation focused on the implementation of co-occurring disorders services through the interagency structure referenced above was successful and on the effectiveness of the services. The evaluation includes site visits at which the evidence-based Dual Diagnosis Capability Mental Health Treatment (DDCMHT) fidelity scale was administered. The evaluation also includes analysis of client outcomes, comparing those treated for substance abuse with others not having a substance abuse problem.

**Major findings contained in the report:**

- "The provision of co-occurring treatment services at HCFP sites by means of an interagency model is an unqualified success."
- All HCFP sites (6) scored as at least dual disorders "capable" on the DDCMHT fidelity scale.
- Site-level program staff from DPSS, DPH and DMH report that participants with substance abuse are being identified and helped earlier.
- The outcome analysis showed that on every measure there was no statistically significant difference between those treated for substance abuse and all other participants. Since previous evaluations of the HCFP have shown a major negative impact of substance abuse on outcomes, this finding is an important indication of the success of the collaborative project.

**Recommendation of the CIMH evaluators:**

Administrators and policymakers are encouraged to expand the number and types of programs where co-occurring disorders can be capably addressed. Such an expansion will in the long run require developing new infrastructure, new cross-training opportunities and a commitment to meeting high co-occurring disorders service standards.

CW:DD:fd

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